



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.

### THE BULLY OF HAIPHONG.

BY GUY BOOTHBY,

AUTHOR OF 'THE FASCINATION OF THE KING,' 'DOCTOR NIKOLA,' &c.

IN THREE PARTS—PART I.



SOME one has put it on record, and with a greater amount of truth than is usually to be found in such assertions, that wherever the Frenchman goes he carries France with him. If this is the case anywhere it may be said to be particularly so in French Indo-China. One might walk down the streets of Hanoi, Haiphong, Saigon—and, if we may go as far, shall we say Turane?—and, having put aside the native element and allowed for the difference in the temperature, and with a little stretch of the imagination, believe one's self in some small French country town. The *magasins*, the cafés, and the soldiery are all there; the slang is perhaps that of Paris of the year before last; there is a certain air of limp staleness about the gaieties that is not usually associated with the French character; but it is France for all that. And when one considers the reason it could scarcely be otherwise. The Englishman invades a new country, hoists his flag, and sets to work to build up history after his own fashion. Before he has been twelve months domiciled in it he has come to regard it as his permanent home, and has in a great measure adapted himself to and adopted what is best in the native way of living. The Frenchman, however, cannot do this. In the first place, he is in most instances Parisian to the marrow of his bones, and he carries indestructible prejudices with him. For, however long a time he may be settled in his new abode, he feels that he is not called upon to attempt in any way to promote its welfare beyond making it as much like the city of his adoration in its worst sense as it is possible for it to be. In this, though at first glance it would not appear so, there is a distinction with a decided difference, and in consequence the visitor is often hard put to it to get at the real

meaning of things, and in nine cases out of ten leaves the place with an entirely wrong impression on his mind.

In Haiphong, for instance, with which my story is entirely concerned, this failing is even more pronounced than in the other places I have mentioned. The effect of the great French capital is to be felt from the moment one's vessel passes the house which the ambitious Paul Bert built for himself, until the low-lying coast-line has dropped astern again and French Indo-China has disappeared with it.

On the evening I am about to describe to you, the Café de France, the principal meeting-place of the port and the centre of such life as is to be found in Haiphong, was crowded to its utmost holding capacity. Every one who was any one was there. For the Messageries Maritimes steamer had arrived from Europe that afternoon, and she brought important news from home with her. It was a time of great political excitement in France; and the ripples of the commotion, like those made upon a mill-pond by a stone, reached across all those thousands of miles, and even agitated the inhabitants of that quiet colony of Tonking. So far the colonists had only had the barest outline by telegram; now there was a chance of hearing full particulars. Party feeling ran high, and when the mail-boat landed its cargo of correspondence the excitement was almost at boiling-pitch. It was plain to the least observant that only the tiniest of sparks was needed to cause an explosion, and many of those present in the café that evening felt as though they were smoking their cigars in a powder-magazine. Amongst them were several passengers from the mail-boat, and these with but one exception formed the centres of attentive groups. The exception, however, sat apart, smoking his cigarette and sipping his coffee with a preoccupied air.

He was a tall young fellow, with a frank, attractive face, who might have been anything from twenty to five-and-twenty years of age. He was neatly but by no means fashionably dressed; indeed an intelligent observer would probably have noticed that he had not the appearance of being the possessor of much wealth. As a matter of fact he had been a second-class passenger on the steamer that had brought him to Haiphong, and even then had been compelled, by lack of means, to refrain from taking part in any of the little amusements which entailed even the smallest expenditure of money. But it must not be inferred from this that he was ashamed of his poverty. Far from it. On the other hand he bore himself with singular frankness and a modesty that had made him highly popular with those who had been able to cultivate his acquaintance. He was thinking now, in the midst of this gesticulating and vociferating babel, of the circumstances which had caused him to leave the small Normandy town, where only a year before he had embarked on the profession of a notary, to make the long voyage to such an out-of-the-world place as Tonking. As he followed this train of thought along it became evident that it was a pleasant one, for his eyes brightened and his fingers played merrily upon the table. He was without doubt a young fellow who, if the chance were vouchsafed him, would do his best to give a good account of himself in the world.

By the time he had smoked his cigarette and had finished his cup of coffee the excitement in the room had reached its climax. At first, having little or no party feeling, he had been amused; but, tiring of the noise and heat, at last he was about to rise and retire to his own hotel when an elderly man entered the room from the veranda at the farther end and approached the table at which he was seated. There was something about the appearance of this individual which interested the youth, and he also noticed that the other's presence had a sobering effect upon the majority of those present. And indeed he was a picturesque figure of a man, one who would be likely to attract attention in whatever company he might find himself. His height was considerably above the average, his frame spare but sinewy. His face was haughty to the borders of insolence, an effect which was increased by his bristling white moustache and imperial, upon which, it was plain, he was accustomed to bestow no small amount of attention. His hair was of the same venerable colour; and, as if to strengthen the impression already produced, he wore it rather longer than is usual save by poets or actors. As far as his dress went he was the pink of perfection, though it was plain to the least observant that his raiment had seen a considerable amount of wear. Hot as was the evening, he wore gloves, and when he reached the end of the room, and turned to survey those present, he held a gold-rimmed eyeglass to his eye.

After a close and searching scrutiny, under the influence of which many of those near him quailed visibly, he seated himself at a small table to the right of that at which the youth was sitting, and called a servant. Then in a stern voice he ordered a glass of absinth, and, as soon as the materials were brought, drew off his gloves and proceeded to mix it, frowning prodigiously meanwhile. This delicate operation having been completed to his satisfaction, he placed his hat on a chair beside him, and rose to his feet. Then raising his glass and speaking in a voice that penetrated to every corner of the room, he said very distinctly, so that there might be no pretence on the part of the company present that they had not caught his meaning, 'I drink to France and to the restoration of the Monarchy.' Having done so, he replaced his glass upon the table, and glanced round the room in the hope of finding somebody boasting sufficient audacity to take up the challenge he had thrown down. No one, however, seemed desirous of gratifying him in this respect, so he resumed his seat and continued to sip the decoction he had mixed for himself, smiling scornfully as he noticed the sudden hush that had descended upon the room. He knew his power and was never tired of exercising it. Fate, however, was going to furnish him with a victim before the night was out.

He had well-nigh finished his drink, and was beginning to think of leaving the place, when a small, stout man of the true French *functionary* type came up the central avenue between the tables, and, without looking at the man who was already seated there, sat down and called a *garçon*. Having given his instructions, he turned himself about and realised for the first time who his companion was. His astonishment and dismay were boundless; his mouth and eyes opened beyond their natural extent, and for a moment he gasped for breath. In all probability he would have got up and moved away, but that he was afraid by so doing he would give offence to the very man he most wished to conciliate. The other noticed the effect he had produced, and, from the cruel smile that made its appearance upon his face, it was evident he found some satisfaction in it.

'*Bon soir*,' he said, with a graceful inclination of his head. 'It is sometime since I last had the pleasure of seeing monsieur. Now, however, we meet on an occasion of considerable importance. You have heard the news of course?'

This question was exactly what his companion had dreaded. The young man at the other table watched his face and noticed that it had grown even paler than before.

'I have heard something,' he replied, in what was intended to be a conciliatory tone, 'but, *ma foi*, if one is to believe all one hears we shall have enough to do in this world.'

The man with the gray moustache and the cruel eyes leant a little forward and tapped with his

fingers softly upon the marble top of the table. As he did so he frowned ominously.

'Monsieur, I trust, will forgive my saying so,' he began, 'but that very lack of interest has brought our glorious France to its present low ebb. How can we hope to win back our self-respect when the greater portion of our countrymen refrain from showing any active interest in the management of its affairs? Had I my way I would deal summarily with such people. You, yourself, monsieur, who have so much at stake, and who'—

'I beg your pardon a thousand times, Monsieur Desrolles,' interrupted his wretched companion, 'but I fear you do not quite comprehend my meaning.'

'In that case monsieur must pardon my stupidity,' returned the other with elaborate sarcasm, the frown meanwhile increasing upon his forehead. 'I regret you should not consider me capable of discussing the present somewhat complicated political situation with you. Whatever may be said of me behind my back, it is the first time I have been told to my face that I am losing the keenness of my faculties. Perhaps you will be good enough to say so in as many words, in order that there may be no further misunderstanding between us. I shall then know how to deal with you. One does not like to think one is in one's dotage. Nevertheless, I agree with you that old men are better out of the way.'

By this time large beads of perspiration were standing upon the other's forehead, and more than once he moistened his dried lips with his tongue. But Desrolles would not give him an opportunity of speaking. He was playing with him as a cat does with a mouse. Once he dropped his right hand beside his chair, and as he did so he gave a peculiar twist to his wrist, as if he were practising a somewhat intricate thrust with a foil. This action, you may be sure, was not lost upon his companion, who, in the hope of turning the torrent of his speech, hastened to change the conversation by inviting him to join him in another glass of absinth. Desrolles, however, received the invitation with less alacrity than the other had hoped he would show.

'Monsieur is kindness itself,' he said; 'but if my brain be as clouded as you were just now good enough to suggest, it would be most unadvisable that I should render it more so by exceeding my usual allowance.'

'I beg that you will not believe that I meant such a thing,' burst in the other, with a vehemence and obsequiousness that at any other time would have been ludicrous. 'The sharpness of Monsieur Desrolles's intellect is far too well known in Tonking ever to have such an insinuation made against him. What I did mean to suggest was that beyond reading in the paper the first vague rumours of what had taken place in Paris, I knew nothing. That I take an absorbing interest in it I must beg you will not doubt. Indeed it was with the inten-

tion of learning the latest details that I came here to-night.'

Desrolles was graciously pleased to accept the explanation and to recover his equanimity. The change in the other was instantaneous; but having got safely out of the fire he had not the wit to take advantage of his opportunity and withdraw altogether from the scene. On the contrary, he seemed so emboldened by his good fortune that, under the influence of a momentary self-conceit, which he had occasion almost instantly to regret, he ventured an opinion on the topic which was just then absorbing the attention of the room. He was 'out of the frying-pan into the fire' with a vengeance now. In the innocence of his heart he praised the sagacity and foresight of the party then in power. Desrolles heard him out with a sarcastic smile upon his face.

'It is evident,' he said, when the other had finished, 'that you know nothing at all of what you are saying, and it is also quite plain to me that you forget in whose presence you give vent to such utterly unfounded assertions. The men you call statesmen—bah! I will not defile my mouth with the mere mention of their names. What are they? Who was it got us into difficulties over that precious business in '67? Why, the man you are now lauding to the skies, Berritaut. Who made us the laughing-stock of Europe in '79? Why, the man you call a born statesman! Who would have sold us to the Germans in the '80's had he been permitted an opportunity, but De Saldenhac? Saprissi! Monsieur, it seems to me that the disgrace of'—

He paused for a moment, interrupted by a sound which came from the table at which the young man who had landed from the mail-boat that afternoon was seated. The latter had risen from his seat, and, with a face white as the marble top of the table before him, was approaching the man who had just made himself so conspicuous by his denunciation of the ministry.

Seeing that something was about to happen, and that there was every probability of trouble, there was a general stir in the room, and those present drew nearer in order that they might witness what promised to be an exciting scene. Reaching the table, the young man paused for a moment while he attempted to recover his self-possession. Under the influence, however, of Desrolles's cruel eyes he found that such an attempt was useless.

'You seem to have something on your mind, *mon ami*,' said the latter as he gave a twirl to his fierce moustache and looked him up and down. 'Perhaps the heat of the room is too much for you, and you would be better on the veranda. You must be careful how you excite yourself in this climate.'

'It is not that, it is not that,' cried the young man. 'You have insulted one for whom I have the greatest esteem, and I demand from you an instant apology.'

The crowd about them stared at each other in

blank amazement. It was plain to all of them that this stranger youth, whoever he might be, had not the least notion of the reputation of the man he had taken upon himself to beard. They glanced first at him and then at Desrolles, who was still leaning back in his chair twirling his moustache with exaggerated insolence, at the same time affecting to be deeply concerned at the scene he had occasioned.

'Monsieur must pardon me,' he said, in the clear cutting tone that the rest of the room knew so well, 'if I do not quite realise the situation. Monsieur has taxed me with insulting his friend. Perhaps it would be as well if he would state which of those I named has the honour to consider him his champion.'

'You stated that Monsieur de Saldenhac would have sold us to the Germans in the '80's had he found an opportunity. I say that Monsieur de Saldenhac is my friend, and that when you bring such an accusation against him you lie, and I repeat I demand from you an instant apology.'

Desrolles laid himself back in his chair, and once more looked the young man over. The points of his moustache by this time reached almost to his eyes.

'This is really very interesting,' he said; 'and pray who may you be who with such assurance set yourself up as the friend of the Minister for Foreign Affairs? I cannot remember ever having had the honour of seeing your face before.'

'It does not matter in the least who I am,' replied the young man; 'but when you bring such accusations against an honourable man you lie and must be punished for it. I insist upon your withdrawing the assertion you made just now, and at once.'

'*Pardieu!* young as you are, you crow very loud, my friend,' said Desrolles. 'It seems to me you are a bantam whose comb would be none the worse for a little cutting. When you are older, if you ever grow older, you will learn that it is not wise for youths to talk in this fashion to those

of maturer years. Instead of your hurting me be thankful that I do not punish you as you deserve.'

'You have not done as I told you,' cried the young man, who was now almost beside himself with passion. 'Since you speak untruths of a man who is not here to defend himself, it is evident that you are a coward as well as a liar, and thus I show my contempt for you.' So saying, he drew back his arm, and, before any of those about him could prevent it, had struck the other a violent blow on the cheek. The look on Desrolles's face changed as if by magic. He seemed to grow a foot taller; and his expression, from being merely contemptuous, became absolutely fiendish.

'That is enough, young man,' he cried, springing to his feet like a wounded lion; 'with that blow you signed your death-warrant. I have put up with your insolence too long. To-morrow morning I will kill you with as little compunction as I would a pigeon.'

The young man, however, was still too much under the influence of his anger to have very much care for the dangerous position into which he had got himself. He glared at his enemy with flashing eyes and heaving chest.

'As you will, sir,' he said, with an attempt at calmness. 'I am prepared to abide by what I have done. I am a stranger; but if there is any one present who will act for me, the necessary preliminaries can be arranged without further loss of time.'

A young officer of the line who had witnessed the whole *fracas*, and who was conversant with Desrolles's character, immediately stepped from the crowd and approached the youth.

'If monsieur will accept my services,' he said, 'I will place myself at his disposal with the greatest pleasure. My name is Gustave Thielbert, lieutenant of the 283d Regiment.'

'I am sincerely indebted to you,' said the other, and a moment later they had left the *café* together.

## REVELATIONS OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN CATTLE-TRADE.

**F**EW persons outside the comparatively narrow circle of those acquainted with the transit of live-stock from South America to England have any idea of the unspeakable horrors enacted on board the vessels engaged in this trade. Were these fearful scenes of death and slaughter among the live-stock more universally known, public opinion would long ago have insisted upon the enactment of preventive regulations like those which have had such salutary effect in the North Atlantic cattle-trade. The vessels engaged in this department of over-sea commerce mainly make their homeward voyage from

the River Plate to Liverpool, and bring large consignments of cattle and sheep from Monte Video and Buenos Ayres to meet the deficit in our home meat-supply. Some of the steamships engaged in the Plate-trade are specially built for the purpose, and duly fitted with the machinery necessary to carry large consignments of live-stock on the homeward trips. Unfortunately, however, many of the vessels so engaged are of the 'tramp' order—that is, they trade here, there, or anywhere, wherever in fact a cargo is forthcoming; and it is upon these vessels that the shameful scenes of death and slaughter occur.

A glance at the map shows that the voyage from



the River Plate is necessarily a long one. The distance is close upon seven thousand miles, and the time occupied averages about thirty days. But it is not the distance alone which is detrimental to the sea-transit of live-stock. It is the vicissitudes of climate which are experienced *en route*. The vessel may leave the River Plate during the southern summer, have a stifling journey through the tropics, and then as she approaches British waters encounter the full rigours of the northern winter. The North Atlantic trade is conducted along the same latitude, and roughly there is no climatic difference between the place of origin, sea-route followed, and final port of destination. But in the Plate trade all is different. Cattle and sheep raised on the subtropical plains of the Argentine Republic are hurried on shipboard, transported through the hottest part of the Atlantic Ocean, to face the cold winds of the English winter. But to realise aright the miseries to which these innocent ministers to human necessity are subjected some knowledge of the conditions under which they are shipped is requisite.

The Argentine government has a code of regulations which is supposed to impose a check upon overcrowding or other conditions of carriage calculated to militate against the safety of ship or live-stock. Unfortunately, however, the officials entrusted with the enforcement of these rules are hardly noted for their probity. Their interpretation of the regulations is in many cases entirely dependent upon the 'backsheesh' they receive from the shippers. There is a reprehensible custom, too, followed by many owners of tramp boats of letting the whole deck-space of their vessels for a lump sum. This is perhaps the most regrettable feature of the whole trade, for the exporters, in accordance with the terms of their agreement, simply crowd cattle in every nook and corner of the vessel's decks, while on a wooden platform over and above all are carried the unfortunate sheep.

Now, it is obvious that there are places on a vessel's deck upon which cattle should not be carried if their safety and the proper working of the ship are to be considered. Cattle, however, are carried over hatches and even over winches. The captain of such a ship is quite powerless to prevent this overcrowding, although he well knows that the crew are endangered by the enhanced difficulty of working the ship. On such a boat the officer on the bridge looks forward on to a flock of sheep exposed to all the winds that blow and the seas which may come aboard the vessel; aft his range of vision lies over the same floating farm-yard; while below him are the cattle-pens with their bellowing, uneasy inmates.

For a time all may go well; the cattle get accustomed to their new surroundings and begin 'to pick up a bit.' Frequently, however, bad weather comes on, and then a few short hours suffice to convert the vessel's decks into a veritable shambles. Often the fittings are of the flimsiest character,

and as the ship rolls and pitches they carry away; and the now unprotected inmates of the pens are thrown hither and thither as the vessel rolls to port or starboard. To add to the confusion, a heavy sea may come aboard, and after sweeping dozens of unfortunate sheep away, complete the hideous scene taking place on the cattle-deck. The picture as sketched to the writer by an officer who had witnessed it, not once nor twice but many times, is horrible in the extreme. Imagine a score or two of helpless cattle dashed from one side of the ship to the other as the vessel rolls from port to starboard and starboard to port, amid a ruin of smashed pens, with limbs broken from contact with hatchway combings or winches, dehorned, gored, and some of them smashed to mere bleeding masses of hide-covered flesh; add to this the shriek of the tempest, the impossibility of the crew getting from one part of the ship to the other, and the frenzied moanings of the wounded beasts, and the reader will have some faint idea of the fearful scenes of danger and carnage occurring on these floating farm-yards.

A few months ago a cattle-laden steamer homeward bound from the River Plate lost half her cattle and nearly all her sheep in one short three-quarters of an hour, and that when she was well off the English coast. A strong gale sprang up, accompanied by a heavy sea, and the captain, after running before it as long as he thought it safe, deemed it advisable to bring the vessel round so as to meet the heavy seas bow-on. It was while performing this manoeuvre that the vessel was swept and the mischief done. That such a nautical tragedy is of no unusual occurrence the following particulars of recent losses will show.

The figures quoted refer to Liverpool-bound ships with consignments of South American cattle and sheep on board. In each case the loss referred to is of recent occurrence, the voyage having been made during last year. The *Sola* lost 21 cattle out of 110 carried; *Cranford*, 31 out of 150 shipped; *Hydarnes*, 66 out of 289; and *Brookside*, 103 out of 140. This same vessel is credited with having shipped 758 sheep, of which number she brought into the Mersey no more than 78! The *Alfa* lost 59 cattle out of 109 and 396 sheep out of 599. The *Highland Chief* lost 43 cattle out of 150 placed on board, and the *Hippomanes* the same number out of 280. From the *Magdala* 98 cattle were lost; while the *Oceania* discharged 118 less than she took on board; the *Port Melbourne*, 39; the *Austrian*, 105; the *Ribston*, 71; the *Nyanza*, 198; the *Endeavour*, 94; the *Julia Park*, 189; and the *Atlantic*, 87; while the *Quantock*, which left the River Plate with 395 cattle and 1200 sheep on board, brought into the Mersey 69 cattle and 394 sheep less than the number shipped.

Such are some of the losses incurred by Liverpool-bound steamers during last year, from which it will be seen that the annual waste from these cattle-carriers must attain enormous dimensions.

Such losses are by no means an inevitable necessity of this trade, as some regular liners engaged can carry cattle year in year out and incur an average loss of under three per cent. Their fittings, however, are of a stable character, and the vessels are built with a special view to the work they will be expected to perform. In England there are two forces at work aiming at the reform of this trade. The officials of the Board of Agriculture examine the fittings of each cattle-boat and see that they comply with the regulations as to strength and material used, number of animals carried in each pen, &c. But so long as a large section of the trade is conducted by occasional or tramp boats, whose cattle-fittings are intended for use on a single voyage only, it is obvious that there is a great inducement to practise economy.

In many cases, too, the fittings are provided by the shipper, and the unfortunate captain, though he knows that the law is being contravened and that he will be prosecuted on arrival in England, has no voice in the matter. The other factor which aims at the betterment of the South American cattle-trade is the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Its officers board the cattle-boats as they arrive, and invariably prosecute whenever they find a maimed or otherwise wounded beast on board.

It must not be thought that all the losses quoted are due to bad weather. Many of the cattle die not through the violence of the weather. They are simply suffocated through being packed in the ill-ventilated and confined 'tween decks. If anything, the scenes enacted in these regions of the vessel, especially on the occasional boats, are even more horrible than those in which wind and sea are the principal actors. When a beast carried in the 'tween decks, especially in the more inaccessible sections, dies, it is a work of great difficulty to remove the carcass from the pen along the narrow, and it may be intricate, passage to where it can be thrown overboard. It often happens—more frequently than not—that the cattlemen refuse to touch the carcass. They have been engaged to look after live cattle, not to haul out dead ones, &c. The sailors refuse point-blank to interfere, pleading that they are not paid to do cattlemen's work, but to navigate the ship. Thus the work devolves in many cases upon the officers, who cannot refuse, as they have situations to lose; and terribly repulsive work it is. The

stench in this fetid atmosphere is described as 'horrible;' the dead beasts, advanced perhaps in decomposition before death ended their sufferings, are often removed literally in pieces, so cribbed and cabined is the space in which they are carried. And when it is remembered that the mortality in the 'tween decks is greatest while the vessel is steaming through the tropics, the reader's imagination can easily fill in the horrible details of the scenes enacted in the 'tween decks of a South American cattle-boat.

Sharks are, according to the older nautical writers, credited with some occult means of knowing when a corpse was carried on shipboard. Small wonder, then, that these cattle-laden vessels should be accompanied through the tropics by these terrors of the sea. One shipmaster, a bit of a wag, avers that on each voyage homeward he looks to picking up a family of sharks with as much regularity as he would pick up a pilot. He never likes to disappoint them, and assures us that by some means or other they must be acquainted with his firm's sailing-bill, so punctual is their appearance at the same spot. They accompany the vessel for six or seven days, and then, gorged and sated, return to their usual haunts until next they wish to vary their fish-diet with a little beef or mutton.

The marine insurance companies are now realising by bitter experience the risks of the South American cattle-trade, and are determined to discountenance the practice of carrying cattle in the 'tween decks, twenty-five per cent. being the premium required to insure this section of a consignment. It is, however, the government authorities who must move if the shameful barbarities of the trade are to be checked. It is not possible to insist that large vessels of the North Atlantic cargo lines type should be employed in the trade; but it should be possible for the legislature to insure that the steamships engaged should be so far adapted for the live-cattle trade as to carry cattle and sheep without subjecting them to the fearful cruelties which are, to say the least of them, a disgrace to our boasted civilisation. Should legislature persist in refusing to interfere, there are not wanting signs that an outraged British public will take the matter into its own hands and insist that British owners should no longer connive at such cruelties or British vessels reck with 'the uncleanly savours of a slaughter-house.'



## JOHN BURNET OF BARNS.

By JOHN BUCHAN.

CHAPTER V.—*continued.*

TOLD my father all that I could think of, and then asked how he had fared in my absence—for I had had but few letters—and what of note had happened at Barns.

'Ay, John,' he said, 'I'm an old man. I fear that my life here will be short. I scarce can get outside without Tam Todd to lean on, and I have little sleep o' nights. And John, I could wish that you would bide at home now, for I like to see you beside me; and you'll have learned all the folk of Glasgow have to teach you. I once wished you a soldier, but I am glad now that I let the thing blow by, for I would have cared little to have you coming here but once in the six months for a flying visit.'

'Nay, uncle,' said my cousin, 'you do not put the matter fairly. For myself, I believe there is none busier in Scotland than I; but, gad, I have always time to slip home to Eaglesham for a day or two. But my father would care little though he never saw me but once in the year, for each time I go back I get a long sermon on my conduct, with my expenses for the year as a text, till I am fairly driven out of the house for peace.'

At this my father laughed. 'Ay, ay,' said he, 'that's like my brother Gilbert. He was always a hard man at the siller. Man, I mind when we were both the terrors o' the place; but all the while not a thing would he do if it meant the loss of a bodle. Pity but I had taken after him in that, and John would have been better supplied to-day.'

'Oh,' I answered, 'I have all I need, and more.'

Hereupon my cousin spoke with a sneer in his voice. 'A groat is enough for a scholar, but the soldier must have a crown. Your scholar, as doubtless John can tell, is content if he have a sad-coloured suit, some musty books, and a stoup of bad wine; but your fine gentleman must have his horses and servants, and dress himself like his quality for all the maids to stare at, and have plenty of loose silver to fling to the gaping crowd; and he is a poor fellow indeed if he do not eat and drink the best that each tavern can give. As for me I would as soon be a clown in the fields as a scholar, with apologies to my cousin; and he made me another of his mocking bows.

I answered as gently as I could that gentriness did not consist in daintiness of eating and drinking or boisterous display, and that in my opinion nothing gave so fine a flavour to gentility as a tincture of letters; but my father changed the conversation by asking Gilbert what he had been after that day.

'Faith, it would be hard to say,' said he. 'I got a gun from that long-legged, sour-faced groom, and went up the big hill above the trees to have a shot at something. I killed a couple of hares and sprung an old muirfowl; but the day grew warm, and I thought that the wood would make a pleasant shade, so I e'en turned my steps there and went to sleep below a great oak, and dreamed that I ran a man through the breast for challenging my courage. It was an ill-omened dream, and I expected to meet with some mishap to account for it ere I got back, but I saw nothing except a lovely girl plucking primroses by the water-side. Zounds, Jack, what a fool you must be never to have found out this beauty! She had hair like gold and eyes like sapphires. I've seen many a good-looking wench, but never one like her.'

'And what did you do?' I asked with my heart beating wildly.

'Do?' he laughed. 'Your scholar would have passed in silence, and written odes to her as Venus or, Helen for months; whereas I took off my bonnet and made haste to enter into polite conversation. But this girl would have none of me; she's a rose I warrant with a pretty setting of thorns. She tripped away; and when I made to follow her became Madame Fine-airs at once, and declared that her servants were within easy reach, so I had better have a care of my conduct.'

My father shot a sharp glance at me, and addressed my cousin: 'The maid would be Marjory Veitch, old Sir John's daughter, at Dawyck. He, poor man, has gone to his account, and her brother is abroad, so the poor girl is lonely enough in that great house. John and she have been friends from the time they were children. She has come here too, and a pretty, modest lass she is, though she favours her mother rather than her father's folk.'

At this intelligence my cousin whistled long and low. 'So, so,' said he, 'my scholar has an eye in his head, has he? And Dawyck is not far off, and—well, no wonder you do not care for the military profession. Though, let me tell you, it is as well for the course of true love that there are few cavaliers in this countryside, else Mistress Marjory might have higher notions.'

I answered nothing, for though I loved Marjory well and thought that she loved me, I had never spoken to her on the matter; for from childhood we had been comrades and friends. So I did not care to reply on a matter which I regarded as so delicate and uncertain.

My cousin was a man who was sorely vexed by receiving no answer from the object of his

witticisms; and perhaps on this account he went further than he meant in his irritation. 'Nay, John,' he went on, 'you're but a sorry fellow at the best with your tags from the Latin and your poor spirit. I am one of the meanest of His Majesty's soldiers, but I can outride you, I can beat you at sword-play, at mark-shooting, at all manly sports. I can hold my head before the highest in the land; I can make the vulgar bow before me to the ground. There are no parts of a gentleman's equipment in which I am not your better.'

Now, had we been alone I should not have scrupled to fling the lie in his teeth, and offer to settle the matter on the spot. But I did not wish to excite my father in his feeble health, so I made no reply beyond saying that events would show the better man. My father, however, took it upon himself to defend me. 'Peace, Gilbert,' he said. 'I will not have my son spoken thus of in my own house. He has as much spirit as you, I'll warrant, though he is less fond of blowing his own trumpet.' I saw with annoyance that my father plainly thought my conduct cowardly, and would have been better pleased had I struck my cousin then and there; but I knew how cruelly excited he would be by the matter, and in his weakness I feared the result. Also the man was our guest and my cousin.

When we rose from supper I assisted my father in walking to his chair by the fire; for, though the weather was mild and spring-like, his blood was so impoverished that he felt the cold keenly. Then my cousin and myself strolled out of doors to the green lawn, below which Tweed ran low and silvery clear. I felt anger against him, yet not so much as I would have felt towards another man had he used the same words; for I knew Gilbert to be of an absurd, boasting nature, which made him do more evil than he had in his heart. Still my honour or self-love (call it what you please) was wounded, and I cast about me for some way to heal it.

'Gilbert,' I said, 'we have both done much work to-day, so we are both about equally wearied.'

'Maybe,' said he.

'But your horse is fresh and a good one, as I know; and you are a good horseman as you say yourself. You had much to say about my poor horsemanship at supper. Will you try a race with me?'

He looked at me scornfully for a minute. 'Nay, there is little honour to be got from that. You know the ground, and your horse, for all I know, may be swifter than mine. It was not of horses I spoke, but of the riders.'

'In the race which I offer you,' I answered, 'we will both start fair. Do you see yon rift in the hill beyond Scrape. It is the Red Syke, a long dark hole in the side of the hill. I have never ridden there, for the ground is rough and boggy, and I have never heard of a horseman

there since Montrose's rising. Will you dare to ride with me to yonder place and back?'

At this my cousin's face changed a little, for he had no liking for breaking his neck on the wild hills. And now, when I look back on the proposal, it seems a mad, foolhardy one in very truth. But then we were both young and spirited and reckless of our lives.

'Mount and ride,' said he. 'I'll be there and back before you are half-road, unless, indeed, I have to carry you home.'

Together we went round to the stables, and I saddled a black horse of my father's, for Maisie had already travelled far that day—the Weasel we called him, for he was long and thin in the flanks, with a small head and a pointed muzzle. He was viciously ill-tempered, and would allow no groom to saddle him; but before I had gone to Glasgow I had mounted and ridden him bare-back up and down the channel of the Tweed till he was dead-beat and I half-drowned and shaken almost to pieces. Ever since this escapade he had allowed me to do what I liked with him; and though I did not find him as pleasant to ride as the incomparable Maisie, yet I knew his great strength and fleetness. My cousin's horse was a good cavalry charger; strong, but as I thought somewhat too heavy in the legs for great endurance.

We mounted and rode together out among the trees to the fields which bordered on the hills. I was sore in the back when I started, but after the first half-mile my sprightliness returned, and I felt fit to ride over Broad Law. My cousin was in an ill mood, for the sport was not to his taste, though he felt bound in honour to justify his words.

The spur of Scrape which we came to was called by the country people the Deid Wife, for there an Irishwoman, the wife of one of Montrose's camp-followers, had been killed by the folk of the place after the rout at Philiphaugh. We had much ado to keep our horses from slipping back, for the loose stones which covered the face of the hill gave a feeble foothold. The Weasel took the brae like a deer; but my cousin's heavy horse laboured and panted sorely before it reached the top. Before us stretched the long upland moors, boggy and cleft with deep ravines, with Scrape on the right, and straight in front, six miles beyond, the great broad crest of Dollar Law. Here we separated, my cousin riding forward, while I thought the road to the left would be the surer. Clear before us lay the Red Syke, an ugly gash into which the setting sun was beginning to cast his beams.

And now I found myself in a most perilous position. The Weasel's feet were light and sensitive, and he stumbled among the stones and tall heather till I had sore work to keep my seat. My cousin's horse was of a heavier make, and I could see it galloping gallantly over the



broken ground. I cheered my steed with words and patted his neck, and kept a tight hand on the rein. Sometimes we slipped among the shingle, and sometimes stumbled over rocks half-hid in brackens. Then we passed into a surer place among short burned heather. The dry twigs gave forth a strange creaking sound as the horse's feet trod on them, and puffs of gray dust and ashes, the sign of the burning, rose at every step. Then beyond this we went to a long stretch of crisp mountain grass, pleasant for both horse and rider. We splashed through little tumbling burns, and waded through pools left by the spring rains. But of a sudden the ground grew softer, and even the Weasel's light weight could not pass in safety. At one time indeed I reined him back just on the brink of a treacherous well-eye, from which neither of us would have returned. I cast a glance at my cousin, who was still ahead; his heavy charger was floundering wearily, and he lashed it as if his life were at stake. Then we passed the green bog and came to a great peat-moss, full of hags where the shepherds had been casting peats. Here the riding was more difficult, for the holes whence the peats had come were often some five feet deep, and it was no easy matter to get a horse out of that treacherous black mud. The Weasel did gallantly, and only once did I dismount, when his hind-feet were too deeply sunk to permit him to leap. Beyond me I saw my cousin riding swiftly, for the middle of the moss as it chanced was the firmest and evenest place. We were now scarce a hundred yards from the ravine of the Red Syke, and even as I looked I saw him reach it, rest a second to give his horse breathing-space, and then turn on his homeward way.

I came to the place a minute after, and having compassion on my brave horse, I dismounted and eased him of my weight for a little. Then I got on his back again and set off. Gilbert I saw before me riding, as I thought, in the worst part, and with a fury that must tell sooner or later on his heavy steed. I had scarce been a moment in the saddle when, so strange are the ways of horses, the Weasel became aware for the first time of the other horse in front. Before it had been a toil for him, now it became a pleasure, a race which it lay with his honour to win. He

cocked up his wicked black ears, put down his head, and I felt the long legs gathering beneath me. I cried aloud with delight, for now I knew that no horse in Tweeddale could hope to match him when the mood was on him. He flew over the hags as if he had been in a paddock; he leaped among the hard parts of the green bog, from tussock to tussock, as skilfully as if he had known nothing but mosses all his days. We came up with Gilbert at the edge of the rough ground, lashing on his horse, with his face flushed and his teeth set. We passed him like the wind, and were galloping among the rocks and brackens while he was painfully picking his steps. A merciful providence must have watched over the Weasel's path that day, for never horse ran so recklessly. Among slippery boulders and cruel jagged rocks and treacherous shingle he ran like a hare. I grew exultant, laughed and patted his neck. The sun was setting behind us, and we rode in a broad patch of yellow light. In a trice we were on the brow of the Deid Wife. Down we went, slipping yards at a time, now doubling along the side; sometimes I was almost over the horse's head, sometimes all but off at the tail; there was never since the two daft lairds rode down Horsehope Craig such a madcap ride. I scarce know how I reached the foot in safety; but reach it I did, and rode merrily among the trees till I came to the green meadowlands about the house of Barnes. Here I dismounted and waited for my cousin, for I did not care to have the serving-men laughing at him riding in after me.

I waited a good half-hour before he appeared. A sorry sight he presented. His breeches and jerkin had more than one rent in them; his hat was gone; and his face was flushed almost crimson with effort. His horse had bleeding knees and her shoulders shook pitifully.

'Pardon me, Gilbert,' I said in a fit of repentance; 'it was a foolish thing in me to lead you such a senseless road. I might have known that your horse was too heavy for the work. It was no fault of yours that you did not come home before me. I trust that we may forget our quarrels and live in friendship as kinsmen should.'

'A truce to your friendship!' he cried in a mighty rage.

## THE HOMELY TUBER.



MOST of us probably derived our earliest information concerning the 'apple of the earth,' as it is called in some Continental languages, from some such book as *The Child's Guide to Knowledge*, where, among other things, we learned that for a long time after its importation by Sir Francis Drake to-

wards the close of the sixteenth century, it was grown only by men of fortune, and in the time of Charles I. was a luxury provided for the queen's table at the price of two shillings a pound. How different from to-day, when at least half-a-million human beings in Ireland alone stand, with every failure of the potato-crop, in jeopardy of starvation! The potato became a staple crop in

Ireland in the sixteenth century, was a common field crop in England before the middle of the eighteenth century, but was twenty or thirty years later in establishing itself in Scotland, Germany, or France. In 1853 a monument to Sir Francis Drake was erected at Offenburg in Baden in token of gratitude for his having introduced potato-culture into Europe.

Mr W. P. O'Brien, in his book on *The Great Famine* (1896), gives an account of the years of distress and panic which followed such a calamity during the years 1845-47, throwing a dark shadow over the earlier years of the present reign, and taxing to the utmost the resources of the administrations of Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell. The fungus causing the potato-disease, so destructive and difficult to deal with, is known wherever the potato is cultivated, as well as in Chili where it is native; but it has been especially severe in Ireland, where the people came to trust to it too exclusively.

On the other hand, the potato has been one of the great agents in preventing famines in European countries. As an article of diet the potato is invaluable, its solid part consisting principally of starch to the amount of some twenty per cent., which is easily digested; though the potato, or any starchy food, is, taken by itself, very inferior in nutritiousness to wheat or oat meal. The other constituents are sugar, fat, nitrogenous matters, saline matters, and water to the amount of seventy-five per cent. Solanin, a poisonous alkaloid, is also found in the potato-plant, most in the potato-apples, least in the tubers; and boiling removes it. Potato-ash contains nearly sixty per cent. of potash, and nearly twenty of phosphoric acid; but the constituents vary a good deal in their proportions. The superstition of carrying a raw potato in the pocket as a cure for rheumatism may have its origin in the fact of its containing potash.

Starch is largely extracted from potatoes for use in textile factories and in the laundry. *Farina* or potato-starch is made into dextrine or British gum, a substance of great commercial value.

Among other of its numerous uses may be mentioned the preparation of certain varieties of brandy and whisky, distilled from fermented potatoes. In Russia syrup and sugar are prepared from potato-starch. In Germany much potato meal or flour is made, and is used for provisioning ships, barracks, &c.

In some parts of America potatoes are said to be so numerous that they have been used as fuel, being cheaper than coal. A few slices of the peel placed in tobacco that has become unpleasantly dry to smoke soon restores to it its lost moisture without imparting any unpleasant flavour. The potato is akin to tobacco; and tolerable cigarettes may be made from potato-leaves.

A good and cheap imitation of celluloid, which in its turn is a good and cheap imitation of ivory, is produced by boiling potatoes, after being peeled, for

several hours in water containing eight per cent. of sulphuric acid, ridding the resulting pasty mass of its moisture by pressure, and afterwards moulding it into the required form—combs, knife-handles, pianoforte-keys, pipes difficult to distinguish from meerscham, &c. The substance can also be dyed and turned in a lathe and applied to any of the purposes for which real ivory, now becoming scarcer every year, is usually employed, such as billiard-balls and various fancy articles. Some kinds of hardened potato-pulp are now extensively used in the manufacture of buttons. But a couple of generations back snuff was in high favour, and boxes were largely made. A common material for them was potato-pulp, which, after being mixed with some sticky substance, moulded, dried, and varnished, had all the appearance of superior papier-maché. As a penwiper and rack combined, a potato is said to be an excellent preservative against rust and mildew.

A curious dish, 'potatoes and point,' was said to be only too common amongst the poverty-stricken inhabitants of Western Ireland, who used, according to one explanatory legend, to place a salt herring in the centre of the table and point their 'praties' at it in order to get the flavour; according to another authority, salt, in the days when there was a heavy duty upon it, took the place of the salt fish. The dish is mentioned in the *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, printed in 1824: 'When there is but a small portion of salt left, the potato, instead of being dipped into it by the guests, is merely, as a sort of indulgence to the fancy, pointed at it.' R. Anderson, in one of his Cumberland ballads, says:

Dinnerless gang ae hawf o' the week;  
If we get a bit meat on a Sunday,  
She cuts me nae mair than would physie a sneype,  
Then we've 'tatey and point every Monday.

The following poem by the Rev. J. T. Pettee, 'Prayer and Potatoes,' said to have formed part of a charity-sermon in Massachusetts some five-and-twenty years ago, portrays a poor old woman, whose sole subsistence had been potatoes for many weeks past, as seated in an armchair bemoaning the failure of her store and racking her weary brain as to whence she is to obtain more. Suddenly she thinks of the deacon over the way, and sends for him.

The deacon came over as fast as he could,  
Rejoiced at a chance of doing her good,  
But never once thought of potatoes.  
'Now, tell me,' said he, 'the chief want of your soul?'  
And she, good woman, expecting a dole,  
Immediately said, 'Potatoes.'

He prayed for wisdom, and truth, and grace:  
'Lord, send her light from Thy holy place!'  
She murmured, 'Oh, send potatoes!'  
And still, at the close of each prayer he said,  
He heard, or fancied he heard, instead  
This strange request for potatoes.

## 'THE FATAL SHOT' AT TRAFALGAR.

By ARTHUR M. HORWOOD, Author of *In the Shadow of the Sphinx*, &c.

**M**R LAMB groaned, and restlessly rolled his head from side to side on his uneasy pillow. He was suffering from agonising toothache; and not being by any means a patient sufferer, he aggravated the malady by his fevered tossing and turning about. At intervals he anathematised the unsound molar and threatened it with extraction on the morrow; meanwhile, he compressed his jaw with one hand, and, with the other, scratched the skin of his face savagely as a counter-irritant.

It was quite a considerable time before he bethought himself of a common-sense palliative—a piece of cotton-wool steeped in brandy. He unsteadily floundered out of his truckle-bed, stepped gingerly across the tile flooring in the dark, and after upsetting one or two articles of furniture found a piece of wadding in his wardrobe, and then with a chink extricated a bottle from the cupboard. Of course the natural thing was next, in saturating the wool, to spill some of the spirit on his bare toes; whereat he gave utterance to a fretful cry through his compressed lips, then he savagely rams the wool into his decayed tooth and climbs back into bed.

Even then he experienced no relief; on the contrary, his distress rather increased: his mouth overflowed with saliva, and he worked himself up into a perfect frenzy. Again he bounded out of bed, ejected the wadding most emphatically, and proceeded to hurriedly drag on his clothes with a view to taking a nocturnal ramble. Toothache, he remembered, will sometimes yield to bodily exercise. He dressed himself fully, and, before quitting his room, placed a loaded pistol in his coat pocket; for Cadiz in 1805 was not so safe a place for nocturnal rambles as it is at the present day. Then he groped his way down a flight of marble stairs, fumbled a good deal over bolts and bars, and let himself out into the dim, silent street.

Mr Lamb was well acquainted with the topography of the Andalusian city, having occupied a stool in a Spanish merchant's office for several years. He took his way up the Calle San Francisco and the Calle Bilbao, and then turned down the Calle Fernando. The sound of surf breaking on the shore now reached his ears, and presently he emerged upon the Muralla, or sea-wall, that commands a view of the magnificent bay. For some little time past the number of ships lying at anchor had been augmented by the French fleet under Admiral Villeneuve.

Mr Lamb's eyes were confronted this lovely, quiet autumn night with a chain of anchor lights that seemed to reach from the Punta de San Felipe to Puerto Real across the bay. Farther along faintly glimmered those of the Spanish war-

vessels, besides those of the merchant-ships that crept in and out in mortal terror of capture by those ubiquitous cruisers of His Britannic Majesty King George III. The Englishman paced along the sea-wall, occasionally stopping to idly count the number of lights, keeping his mouth tightly closed meanwhile. A few paces farther on he had to open it when gruffly challenged by a sentry, whose stone pagoda-shaped sentry-box cut a wedge out of the full rising moon, shining low down, huge and golden.

Mr Lamb was curtly admonished to leave the Muralla—the presence there of the public at one in the morning not being approved of in those troublous times, so he obediently retired, not caring which way he went, as he remarked to himself. Traversing one or two streets, he came out upon the Plaza de la Constitucion just as, with a sepulchral boom-boom, two o'clock was announced from the church tower of San Antonio, that lords it over the square. Then, from beyond its precincts, the quivering intonation of a sereno or night-watchman took up the refrain, *Ave Maria purissima! las dos han dado y sereno.*

The last long-drawn note floated away, and then the plaza relapsed into its former stillness. Mr Lamb paced around it to make its circuit before branching off down one of its outlets. Not a light shone from any of the tall houses; even the Casino had retired into darkness. The public oil-lamps at long intervals burned dim and yellow, rendered more so by contrast when the house-tops and the belfry of the church caught the first beams of the rising moon.

At first Mr Lamb thought he had entire possession of the square; but on traversing its fourth side he discovered he was mistaken by hearing a heavy snoring proceed from one of the stone benches before the church.

Upon a closer inspection a uniformed figure is disclosed lying at length. His hat has fallen off; his left arm pillows his head, showing a face deeply disfigured with a scar, whilst the right is stretched out at full length as though pointing at Mr Lamb. The Englishman examines the figure intently—why, he could hardly have said—and mentally decides he is a marine belonging to the French fleet. And, as if for confirmation, the snores are broken, and the husky voice of a drunken sleeper articulates, *Tiens, le voilà, Lord Nelson!* The trigger-finger of his outstretched right hand closes convulsively as though discharging a musket, and his mouth opens and shuts, the corner drooped as if biting a cartridge. The square has grown so light, as the moon peeps over the row of houses to the east, that Mr Lamb can plainly distinguish the frown that creases the man's heavy brow, the twitch of his

nostrils, and the very contraction of his left closed eyelid in simulating the action of biting. The buttons of his uniform catch the rays of the moon and glow like fire-flies, his gaitered legs and deep cuffs stand out like snow against the darker portions of his dress.

In contemplating this sworn enemy of his country, Mr Lamb, standing in the deep shadow of an ornamental column, has forgotten all about his toothache and falls to speculating upon the fate that may be in store for this weather-worn marine. 'He'll be fighting soon—directly the fleets sail out—perhaps in a couple of days' time—poor beggar—I wonder if he'll be killed! I ought to hate him—one of my country's enemies—perhaps I ought to be fighting him instead of peaceably regarding him and listening to his snoring and drunken muttering. My goodness, how he does snore! . . . Why, good'—

Mr Lamb is not alone in contemplating the sleeper. A dark figure in a ragged cloak has suddenly appeared bending over the marine—so suddenly that Mr Lamb thinks it must have sprung out of the ground. He can see no face—nothing but the cloak—and a hand—and a murderous knife! . . .

Mr Lamb utters a cry and starts forward out of the shadow—and the figure has vanished! as suddenly and mysteriously as it appeared; and the Englishman finds himself standing, the saviour of his country's enemy, in the broad moonlight, his heart in his mouth and his pistol in his hand, at half-past two in the morning, in the Plaza de la Constitucion.

'*Ave Maria purissima,*' wails the sereno at the corner of the principal street, '*las dos y media han dado y sereno.*'

Mr Lamb wipes the perspiration from his brow and reflects what he had better do. If he leaves the man asleep, the assassin (some savage Spaniard who does not love his country's present allies and quondam merciless conquerors) will return. He endeavours therefore to awaken the French marine, but without avail; his sodden slumber is not so easily broken. In desperation Mr Lamb rushes up to the sereno who has just called the hour, and backing his request by the production of a dollar prevails on the old functionary to come and stand guard over the man until dawn.

As the Englishman finally turns away and bends his steps homewards the marine is still snoring, and the sereno has placed his lantern and pike on the bench and proceeded to give utterance to his first melancholy cry at his new post.

It is three o'clock, and Mr Lamb returns to his bed free from toothache and sleeps the sleep of the just—and the merciful.

A few days later the combined French and Spanish fleets sailed out of Cadiz, and on the 21st October, as Mr Lamb was passing along the Muralla soon after midday, he paused and listened intently, straining his eyes seawards. The horizon

was sailless, except for one or two feluccas gliding in under the influence of the light westerly breeze; but that mild breeze brought to Mr Lamb's ears the earliest intimation of an event that was to leave an imperishable mark on history—a faint, sustained, dull rumble, as of thunder, far, far away seawards.

'Olá, Señor Lamb, that was thunder, was it not?' exclaimed in Spanish a musical voice at his side, and the Englishman, withdrawing his gaze from the horizon, salutes a young lady in a mantilla, escorted by an elderly Don with a curled, white Vandyke beard and an elaborately-tasselled malacca cane.

Mr Lamb does not respond to the young Andalusian's remark without apparent effort.

'It may be thunder, Señorita Carmen, but—but' (swallowing nervously)—'I think it is the sound of cannon!'

'*Caramba!*' broke in the young lady's father. 'A naval engagement.'

'I—I feel almost sure. Listen!'

The three bent their heads and listened with bated breath.

Without a break, though rising and falling on the salt breeze, came the sinister murmur.

'There can be no doubt about it,' cried Mr Lamb after a minute, his face flushed, and speaking quickly. 'The combined fleets of Spain and France are being engaged in battle by my countrymen—by Lord Nelson. . . .

'Do you know,' he continued with a forced laugh, 'I feel I myself ought to be out there, instead of standing in safety on Spanish ground.'

'And yet,' rejoined Carmen maliciously, 'you told me yesterday you had saved a French marine's—an enemy's—life in the Plaza de la Constitucion the other night.'

'Yes, yes; quite so,' returned Mr Lamb rather pompously. 'No Englishman could have done otherwise. I don't repent of my act.'

'And yet, perhaps at this hour, he may be the means of doing much damage—sink a ship even,' joined in the Don, with a grim smile.

'Even then,' retorted the Briton manfully, 'I should simply have done the proper thing. It was common Christianity. The war, after all, is not of my making.' . . . He paused, looked at his watch, whose hands pointed to one o'clock, inclined his ear seawards—still the same distant rumbling murmur; still the same suggestion of a storm that neither approached nor receded; still the same sunshine and soft westerly breeze. 'Nevertheless,' he exclaimed with sudden animation, 'I should very much like to see what that fellow is doing at the present moment.'

Had Mr Lamb's wish been gratified, he would have witnessed the terrible battle of Trafalgar at its height, and in the thick of the fight the *Victory* silencing the guns of the *Redoubtable*, whose only retort is a spiteful crackling of musketry from the sharpshooters stationed in her



tops. Wreathed in smoke, the locality of these riflemen at times is only denoted by thin, bright tongues of fire that spurt downwards towards the deck of the British ship. Ever and anon the breeze fans aside the thick smoke, and groups of French marines and Tyrolese sharpshooters, their faces blackened with smoke and rigid and fierce with the spirit of battle, start into existence through the rifts, suspended high aloft, as though sailing on clouds, veritable angels of destruction, dealing death upon their enemies beneath them; and a closer inspection would have revealed the man whose life Mr Lamb had saved amongst a group of others in the mizentop, loading and firing with terrible rapidity and precision.

Amidst the roar of cannon the report of their small-arms is, except at intervals, inaudible even to themselves. When one and then another drops in a heap on the top, either wounded or killed, they are merely shoved aside or used as breast-works by the survivors, who sustain the fusillade to the utmost of their power.

Mr Lamb's marine is a crack shot, to judge by the savage glare of satisfaction with which he notes the effect of his every discharge.

Again he has brought down his bird.

Shot after shot he pours down with almost unerring aim.

A stronger puff than usual of the westerly breeze clearing away the intercepting smoke, he sees distinctly, as on a stage, a small, active, one-armed officer moving quickly across the deck of the *Victory*, his uniform bears stars, and he is an officer of consequence, pointing with his one arm to right and left as he rapidly gives his orders to those around him.

A horrible eagerness wrinkles the grimy face of the Frenchman; great beads of perspiration start out on his brow and furrow the black on his face.

'*Tiens, le voilà, Lord Nelson!*' he whispers frantically to himself, and he again levels his musket—fires—the one-armed officer falls. . . . It is in truth Nelson.

It is now a quarter after one o'clock, and the minutes of the marine are numbered. He has become the target of the infuriated British. He knows he is doomed. The bullets rattle like hail around him; soon he and another are the sole living occupants of the top. He fires his last shot, which lays low an old quartermaster who is loading for a couple of midshipmen, and the next moment his own light goes out—a ball striking him in the head and another in the breast.

Vengeance has overtaken him—but, alas! the boasted, the idolised Nelson lies dying in the cockpit of the *Victory*.

When news of Nelson's death reached Cadiz, Mr Lamb became possessed of a strange and painful conviction (without more foundation than a dream he had had) that it was the man whose life he had saved who had perpetrated the deed. All his former complacency about having simply done his duty deserted him, and he became so depressed that his friends feared he would take his life. This quite probably would have been the case had not the sereno, who had stood guard over the Frenchman that night in the Plaza de la Constitucion come forward and solemnly declared that on that particular night, whilst his attention had been for a moment diverted, the assassin had again rushed forward and wounded the marine so seriously that he was sent on board his ship in a dying state.

Señorita Lola never mentioned to a soul that she it was who had bribed the sereno to give utterance to this well-intentioned fiction—not even to her husband. For Mr Lamb had become her husband in the following year.

## A NORFOLK WILDFOWL DECOY.

By ERNEST R. SUFFLING, Author of *The Land of the Broads*.



JUST as one associates Newcastle with coal, so does one's thoughts revert to the dumpling-county when decoys are spoken of. East Norfolk is peculiarly and favourably situated for receiving visits from the great flocks of wildfowl which fly south when the cold weather sets in and during its continuance.

Observe how the whole county juts out into the North Sea, as if inviting the wing-weary and hungry flocks to rest and refresh before winging their way farther southward in search of a more congenial climate and a better prospect of adequate sustenance.

And it is not only the position, but the physical features of the county that present such irresist-

ible attractions for migratory birds. Flat stretches of marshland, glittering and ample rivers, numerous and large 'broads,' as the lagoons are called, reed ponds, fen, and woodland are to be seen on every side; and then there are the lakes, many of them of considerable area, which form part of the estate surrounding the Hall, as the chief house in each parish is termed. With all these charms to please the eye of the feathered stranger, how can he possibly resist alighting in some wood-secluded pool, if only to rest his tired pinions and fill his empty crop? A hungry bird has his feelings like a human being; and when those feelings are of weariness and hunger, would he not be a stupid fellow if he passed over a land of plenty—a bird-paradise—without a halt?

Of course he would. So, be he duck or teal,

widgeon or mallard, down he stoops into a pretty, reed-fringed, wood-surrounded bay forming part of a large broad or lake.

Other ducks are there before the new-comers, ducks which, in their plumpness, contentment, and confidence, appear to be peculiarly familiar with the locality. And to tell the truth they *are* familiar, for they are the tame decoy-ducks, with which the new-comers at once fraternise.

They look around the quiet expanse of water and find no cause for alarm. There are the great brown trunks of oak and elm trees, with their naked branches glittering in the early morning sun, for it has been a frosty night, and the hoar-frost bejewels everything it touches with its mystical breath. The brown, dry reeds nod and give forth their peculiar musical sighing, as their long, graceful stems rub against each other in the gentle breeze which is just strong enough to ruffle the surface of the water, which is here and there broken and beringed by the rise of a playful perch or the rush for escape of a roach as it flies from the saw-like jaws of the ever-hungry pike.

There, on the left, knee-deep in water, stands a heron taking his early breakfast of gudgeon and such small fry; and now and again the glint of a busy kingfisher is seen, now green, now brown, as he too steals his morning meal from the pellucid water. See, he seizes a little fish and flies with it to a tree-root which rises, gnarled and hydra-like, from the lake, and giving the head of the small fry a sharp tap on the rough bark, tosses it above his head and catches it deftly, head downward, in his bill, and swallows it without the least fear of the fins or gills catching his distended throat.

On shore the lark sings his blithest as he mounts heavenward, and the wood-pigeons utter their monotonous coo-oo! coo-oo! from the lofty forest trees. 'Here is peace in this place surely!' thinks the poor wanderer, as he trails his wake on the surface of the lake, and finally settles down to enjoy himself.

Alas, poor bird! Peace and death are so closely associated in this sylvan spot that the former is but the precursor for the latter, as the incautious duck soon finds out, but only when too late.

What is that great archway of bent saplings in the little nook over there? How sheltered and inviting it appears! The water at its entrance mirrors the arch and makes it a complete circle; and see, both tame and wild fowl are gradually nearing its entrance!

There is corn floating on the water near the entrance, which both tame and strange ducks at once appropriate; and there is a brown and white dog popping in and out among the reed-screens which border the decoy.

What is the dog doing? Why does he appear and disappear in such a mysterious manner? He just shows himself and then is gone again.

What is the animal about?

That is just what every bird in the strange flock wishes to discover. A dog has a wonderful fascination for wildfowl, and it is that very fascination which lures the poor birds to their doom.

The decoy-ducks (the tame ones) know that now is their time to be fed, and accordingly swim into the 'pipe,' followed by their new friends, who cannot keep their bright eyes off the dog which is acting so strangely. Up the 'pipe' they go, farther and farther, not noticing that as they advance the series of hoops gradually become smaller and smaller, and that the water up which they are swimming also becomes proportionately narrow, and curves round, so that the entrance is no longer visible.

With wonder they sail onward, quacking questions in their mother-tongue, which is probably varied with the brogue or patois of the various tribes to which the flock belongs. Who can tell if the teal can speak or understand the Pochard language or the widgeon converse in Mallardese?

Anyway, onward goes the doomed band, wondering what is at the end of the curious cave of bewilderment into which they have entered, when suddenly a horrid two-legged monster—the decoyman—appears behind them, and they scramble forward, half-flying, half-swimming, amid a tremendous splashing hubbub, right into the end of the net, where they cannot escape, a fact which the decoyman takes deliberate advantage of, by seizing his prey, one by one, and wringing their necks as he remarks to the dog which lies expectantly by him:

'Thet's a rare good "push" my bewty; yew shall hev a extry dose o' old horse for yar breakfast, that yew shall, for yew du du yar work right well—yew du!'

Before having a chat with the garrulous old decoyman let us examine a decoy.

First, we notice that the entrance-hoop is some fifteen or sixteen feet wide and about ten feet high, and very artfully placed, so that it is partially hidden by reeds and the overhanging branches of trees. From the entrance-hoop the 'pipe' runs back some sixty or seventy yards, gradually curving as it recedes from the entrance, so that its tail-end cannot be seen from the mouth. Gradually the hoops diminish in size until they are not more than a yard across, and the whole ends with a purse-net, which is the Ultima Thule of the frightened wildfowl. The netting used to cover the 'pipe' is ordinary galvanised wire-netting.

The dyke or channel beneath the hoops of course diminishes in the same ratio as the hoops themselves, gradually becoming narrower as the 'pipe' is ascended. The water in the dyke is usually not more than a couple of feet deep.

There we have the 'pipe' complete; but besides the 'pipe' are the all-important screens, made of reeds worked in the form of thin, flat

walls, and placed at right angles with the 'pipe,' so that the dog can work round them, and with peep-holes here and there through which the decoyman can see how things are progressing. The screens are about five and a half feet high and twelve feet long, and vary in number from ten to fourteen.

Having seen the construction of the decoy, let us now examine the method of working it.

As is generally known, wildfowl are very shy and delight in retired spots. The first care of the decoyman, therefore, is to make the neighbourhood of his decoy as secluded and quiet as possible, and to allow the wildfowl to settle uninterrupted upon the decoy-water.

The love of concealment leads wildfowl to be partial to waters whose margins abound with under-wood and aquatic plants; hence, if the spot is not already furnished with these, they must be provided; for it is not retirement alone, but a search for food, which leads them into the quiet nooks.

Next to food, wildfowl love a grassy bank, where they may plume and arrange their feathers after a long flight, and on there being such a convenience near the mouth of a 'pipe' a great deal of the decoyman's success depends. It is a necessity, therefore, to have a nice, smooth, grassy slope on either side of the entrance to the 'pipe'—such green lawns are, so to speak, the bait.

Having allured the fowl to the mouth of the 'pipe,' the difficulty is to entice them off the bank into the water without their taking wing, and to lead them successfully to the far end of the decoy.

To get them off the grassy bank into the water, or, if in the water, to cause them to enter the 'pipe,' a dog tutored by the decoyman, shows himself from behind the foremost reed-screen. On seeing the dog the fowl will, if on the bank, immediately take to the water, where they feel more at home against the strange animal by the screen.

Now, among the wildfowl, a number of tame ducks—decoy-ducks—have, from the alightment of the strangers, mixed fraternally with them, and they know that by swimming up the 'pipe' they are not only safe from the dog, but that food awaits them. The decoy-ducks, therefore, straightway swim up the 'pipe' to secure their usual food, and the wildfowl at once follow; the dog in the meantime popping in and out among the screens in a most mysterious manner, as the poor wanderers, following their deceitful civilised friends, swim unconsciously to their doom.

Presently the head of the 'pipe' is neared, and then for the first time the decoyman shows himself, or, hat in hand, waves an arm from behind a screen. This is the immediate signal for the whole body of fowl to take wing and dash up the 'pipe;' but, as the hoops are now narrow and low, their wings come into contact with the

netting, and they fall again into the water; and, being afraid to turn back, the man being close behind them, push forward into the tail of the purse-net, and become the lawful prey of the decoyman. Pochard are seldom, if ever, caught in a decoy, as on being startled by the sudden appearance of the man they turn back and fly in terror to the mouth of the 'pipe' and escape.

Let us indulge in a chat with this worthy. Strongly but loosely built, above the medium height, tawny-bearded, rugged of feature, wrinkled and gray-eyed, the decoyman is a picture of health, contentment, and good-humour. His gray eyes appear to scintillate as he speaks, lighting up his honest, weather-beaten countenance in a remarkably pleasing manner, a sure sign of rude health and a contented mind. He is, as most of the East Norfolk peasants are, a true descendant of the old vikings who plundered and settled here more than a thousand years ago. He needs no pedigree to trace his descent; his very name is a proof of his ancestry—Thirkettle. Many of the names on the east coast have an unmistakable Danish or Scandinavian ring about them—as Seago, Ulph, Hacon, Trorey, Kerrison, and a score others.

'Do you mind answering me a few questions, letting me into a few of your secrets, Thirkettle?' I ask.

'Not at all, maaster. I don't s'pose yew'll set up 'coying agin me,' is his reply, as his expansive mouth lengthens into an extensive grin.

'Well now, why do you have two "pipes" so close together, but running in different directions?'

'Well, maaster, yew must know it's the natur' of fowl to take wing head to wind, and it 'ont du to try and 'coy 'em up the "pipe" unless the wind blow pretty much *down* it; 'cos while the enemy is to leeward on 'em they forge ahead up the "pipe," makin' sure to be able to escape by using their wings, as is only natural. Sometimes they come up the "pipe" *with* the wind, but then when they get to the canopy-net they are scared, and turn round about, facin' the wind, and so escape, and then there's the ould 'un to pay; every fowl 'ithin hearen take off, and the game is up.'

'How many do you average at a "push" for the whole season?'

'Well, I don't know 'zactly what a average is; but sometimes I take half-a-dozen, and sometimes ten times as many; all depends on sarcumstances of weather and season. I have taken as many as five score at one "push," but that was years ago. I'm contented if I get a score, and pleased if I wring two score; but thet ain't so often as I should like.'

'May I ask what price the birds fetch?'

'Why, sartainly. Sometimes on the first day I'll get as much as seven-and-six for a brace o' birds and even half-a-sovereign, but that soon come down to four or five shillings; and when

fowl are plentiful the price come down tu even three shullins or three-and-six a brace.'

'How many go to a dozen?' I ask.

'Oh, we don't give none in; twelve's a dozen, to be sure. Du yew think we gan em one in like the baakers with their loaves?'

'No, my friend; but'—fumbling in my pocket-book—'here is an extract from a book written just over a century since. I will read it:

"Fowl and fish are very plentiful in the Broads, the pike and eels being very large. The duck, mallard, and teal are in such plenty as is scarcely to be conceived. They are taken in prodigious flocks at a time in the decoys. They send these fowl to London twice a week, on horseback, from Michaelmas to Ladyday, and one decoy will furnish twenty dozen or more twice a week for the whole season. Two teal are reckoned equal to one duck, and five duck and twelve teal are accounted a dozen. The usual market-price is about nine shillings for such a dozen."

'There, what do you say to that, Thirkettle?'

'Well, yew see, them wor better times. More fowl and less folks about to fright 'em. Now, last season was a werry fair one, and in the six months I took, big and little, over twelve hundred fowl; and when yew come to set them down, say at two shullins apiece, that ain't so bad for a winter's work.'

'What breed of dog do you think most adapted to this work?'

'Well, some use one kind and some another. I know some think nothin' beat a rough-haired terrier, and sartinly they are good dogs, and I've know'd some capital mongrels what du their work right well and clever; but as you see I am training this young spaniel to the business, though I find it a little difficult to keep him away from the water; it's his natur' to go in. He's a nice-coloured dog, you see, and it's my firm belief that the prettier colour you get a dog the better it is for 'coying: get 'im red if you kin, like an old fox, and he'll attract more than your sad-coloured go-to-the-buryin' black 'un.'

'Have you any idea of the number of decoys in existence?' I ask as a last question.

'No, maaster, yew've done me there, for I've never bin twenty mile from home in my life; and, as I ain't no scholar, I don't read a sight. Still I'd just like to hear that question of yourn answered.'

'And so you shall, my friend, for here in my pocket-book I have made a few notes. All told, there are only about forty now in existence; but at the beginning of this century there were about one hundred and forty, distributed thus: In Lincolnshire, thirty-nine; Essex, twenty-nine; Norfolk, twenty-six; Yorkshire, fifteen; and Somersetshire, fourteen. These, with one or two in some other counties, make the total.

'You look in splendid health, my friend; but do you not have a rough time of it in the very sharp weather?'

'Ah, love me, I du thet. Why, when it's freezin' hard I have to get into thet old tarry punt, and keep a-pullin' about half the night to prevent the ice a-formin' on the water. Fowl like open water, and I ha' to du my best to keep it open; and it ain't no lie I tell yew when I say I've had my eyelashes and beard all frozen as stiff as if they wor cut outer stone. It ain't all fun, maaster, this yer game; and yew dussent light a bit o' baccy in yer pipe, nor make no noise, or clash about to keep yer feet warm; and sometimes I've had mine so numb at the ankle jint that I've been a'most afraid to walk, for fear they'd break off at the ankles; I've felt as if I could kick 'em off at the jint just like a luse pair o' butes.'

Bidding farewell to the talkative decoyman, I retrace my steps through the wood, pleased with the garulity of the man, and pondering over the lot of the happy, solitary fellow, who, when at work, must make no sound nor give utterance to a word even to his dog, and cannot smoke, nor scarcely move, for fear of spoiling his entire vigil. The good fellow's lot reminds me of the lines written by Cowper upon Robinson Crusoe's prototype, Alexander Selkirk.

Oh, Solitude, where are the charms  
Which sages have seen in thy face?  
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,  
Than reign in this desolate place.

And as I ponder I do not envy the decoyman his solitary, frigid lot.

#### WITHOUT WORDS.

We met and we felt there was something between us;  
We met for the first time one night at a ball;  
We met, and it seemed that the past time had seen us  
Companions in something held secret from all.  
I bowed and you smiled, and our eyes interchanging  
A look, as if only we waited the chance  
To say what we met for; we joined the arranging  
Of partners in rows for an old country dance.

Next morning we moved from the covert together—  
The hounds giving tongue and the fox gone away;  
And through our grand gallop across the clean heather  
My tongue was uneasy with something to say.  
And though I was silent I felt that the longer  
We rode so together the nearer it came,  
As though in my being a spark smouldered stronger,  
Awaiting the impulse to break into flame.

Returning at evening when farm-lads were calling  
Their field-weary cattle to stable and byre,  
We rode past the covert as twilight was falling  
Dew-laden with silver on sapling and brier;  
When suddenly something, a look or a sigh, love,  
Disturbed the fine balance between me and you,  
And lo! without time for a word or reply, love,  
Our hearts ran together like wind-shaken dew.

WM. WOODWARD.